Business Plan

2017–2018

Department of
Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA

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Budget 2017–2018: Business Plans

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Message from the Minister

On behalf of the Department of Community Services we are pleased to present the Annual Plan for 2017-2018. Community Services helps vulnerable Nova Scotians meet their basic needs, ensures they are safe from abuse and violence and helps them live independently and inclusively within their communities. To do this, it is vital that we deliver supports and programs efficiently and in an affordable and sustainable way. We continue to take an innovative approach in our work to transform and modernize how Community Services supports our clients and helps more Nova Scotians take control of their own lives, especially during times of crisis.

We want to support young people before they reach crisis. That's why we amended the Children and Family Services Act to help protect youth from 16-18 years of age, improve child safety, streamline court processes and ensure children have a safe and lifelong family relationship that provides consistency, stability, love and guidance. We will continue to strengthen prevention and early intervention programming so Community Services can get involved with children and families sooner when situations are more likely to be remedied.

We're working to have more people living independently and inclusively in their communities. We're doing this by modernizing how we deliver supports to Nova Scotians with differing abilities. The Disability Support Program is developing an array of services that enhances our focus on community-based residential services.

We want to help Nova Scotians in financial need and reduce barriers for them to find employment. We will do this by implementing a range of new programs and interventions through Employment Support and Income Assistance. This includes developing programming to help them become and remain employed.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the passionate staff of Community Services, as well as the teams at Housing Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Council on the Status of Women and all our service delivery partners. Their commitment to helping Nova Scotians that need it most is the driving force in building a stronger Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,
Original signed by

Honourable Joanne Bernard
Minister of Community Services

Mandate

The overall mandate of the Department of Community Services (DCS) is to provide for people in need. The services provided by the Department form Nova Scotia's social safety net and play a significant role in contributing to better futures for Nova Scotians and to the overall health and well-being of communities throughout the Province.

The Department works with individuals, families, youth and children to enable them to meet their basic needs, to have control over their own lives, to be safe from abuse and violence, to be attached to the labour market, and to participate as citizens in their communities.

Programs and services are delivered by departmental staff and by a network of funded organizations, who are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives, while ensuring that supports and services are accessible, affordable and sustainable, include a balanced mix of prevention and intervention, and are delivered efficiently.

The programs and services provided by the Department are key to the social fabric of Nova Scotia, contributing to the success of the work of the core social departments of government like Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice.

Core Functions

The Department has three core business areas: Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA); Child, Youth & Family Supports (CYFS); and the Disability Support Program (DSP). The provision of these services is embedded in *the Employment Support & Income Assistance Act, the Children and Family Services Act, and the Homes for Special Care and Social Assistance Acts*.

The core programs of the Department represent the Province's social safety net. Departmental expenditures consist primarily of grants and contributions – 84% - to individuals in need and organizations providing services on behalf of the Department to persons in need. The remaining 16% covers the cost of operating the Department - including operating its 59 offices across the Province and paying approximately 1,600 DCS staff who are committed to a vision of the constant improvement in the lives of those in need.

The Department of Community Services is transforming. Over the last year, the Department has worked towards developing and recommending changes to programs, policies, service delivery and community capacity in order to improve outcomes for both clients and the overall system. While Transformation is well under way, the variety of interventions, supports and services available have also been improved along the way.

One of the key reasons we are transforming is to ensure that we meet the very purpose we exist as a department – the consistent progress in the well-being of vulnerable Nova Scotians by providing for the most effective social programs and services possible.

This process of transformation is particularly important because Nova Scotia's core social programs have not always kept pace with societal and demographic change, and do not always reflect innovative models of delivery or best practice. That is why we embarked on an ambitious full-scale agenda to achieve more positive outcomes for clients in the context of a sustainable social system.

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) provides financial assistance and supports to people struggling to meet their basic needs. Its programs are designed to help people with the costs of food, clothing and shelter and link them with supports and services that will eventually help them to be more independent, self-sufficient and included in their community.

There are approximately 26,000 households receiving income assistance. This equates to approximately 40,000 beneficiaries. ESIA's employment programs help eligible income assistance recipients get the skills and training they need to be more employable and attach to meaningful work. This can include literacy and skills upgrading, training, and job opportunities.

The Pharmacare Program provides prescription drug coverage for approximately 40,000 people who receive assistance from the Department.

The Department also provides the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB), a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the cost of raising children under age 18.

Child, Youth & Family Supports (CYFS)

Child, Youth and Family Supports provides a variety of programs and services to support Nova Scotia's children, youth and families.

Prevention and Early Intervention offers a wide range of programs to strengthen children, youth and families, support their safety and well-being and maintain healthy family relationships. Most of these services are funded by the Department but provided by community-based organizations and programs such as Family Resource Centres, Parenting Journey, Youth Outreach and Boys & Girls Clubs.

Child Protection investigates reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, attempts to reduce the risk of harm and, when necessary, provides out of home support or placement services.

Placement services are provided when children cannot remain safely at home, either on a temporary or permanent basis. The continuum of placements includes foster care, residential care and adoption. All placement options for children must be either approved or licensed.

The department is moving in a new direction for child welfare in Nova Scotia. The focus is increasingly on working with families earlier, and drawing on their strengths to find solutions before more serious situations may develop. The *Children and Family Services Act* has been updated and strengthened, recognizing all children want to be safe and supported, and parents want the tools they need to raise healthy families.

Effective March 1st 2017, changes to the *Children and Family Services Act*, will help protect Nova Scotians from 16-18 years of age, improve child safety, streamline court processes and ensure children have a safe and lifelong family relationship.

Disability Support Program (DSP)

The Disability Support Program (DSP) serves children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness and physical disabilities in a range of community-based, residential and vocational/day programs.

DSP promotes a participant's independence, self-reliance, security and social inclusion. The goal of the program is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence through a range of programs.

Support options include enrollment in Adult Service Centre programming, help for families who care for a family member with a disability in their own home, support for participants in independent living, and support for people with disabilities in a 24-hour residential support option.

The government has committed to move towards a community-based service model for DSP. In alignment with the DSP Roadmap, transformation of this program will reduce reliance on large facilities, build capacity to better serve participants in communities, and enhance programs to improve quality of life and social inclusion for all participants.

Agencies

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW)

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) was established in 1977 under the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Regulations with the mandate of bringing issues impacting the lives of women and girls in Nova Scotia to the attention of the Minister. The Advisory Council is composed of members that reflect the diversity of women across Nova Scotia and who have demonstrated interest and involvement in women's issues in their communities. Administratively, the office of the NSACSW is aligned with the Department of Community Services. The office of the NSACSW provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

Communities and social well-being improve when women and girls are safe and have the opportunity to fully participate at all levels of society. Freedom from violence and improved economic opportunity are key focuses of the NSACSW. To advance these priorities the NSACSW works collaboratively across government departments, agencies, academia, community groups, and women-serving organizations and is responsible for operational and administrative supports to transition houses, women's centres, and Alice Housing.

Housing Nova Scotia

Housing is more than a roof over our heads. It means family, it means our neighbourhoods, and it's the place we call home. The right housing options help improve lives – people grow up healthier, they do better in school and have more rewarding, productive lives.

Housing Nova Scotia is the primary housing delivery agency in Nova Scotia. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of safe, suitable, and affordable housing for all Nova Scotians. The organization is a provincial government corporation and is administratively aligned with the Department of Community Services. It is staffed by more than 90 employees who deliver and design programs. It relies on the expertise and professionalism of its Housing Authorities staff for the maintenance of safe, suitable, and affordable housing for the benefit of low-income Nova Scotians. Located across the province, the five Housing Authority offices are responsible for the administration, operation, and maintenance of Nova Scotia's 12,000 rental properties.

Housing Nova Scotia strives to ensure all Nova Scotians can live in a home that's right for them, in a price they can afford, in a healthy, vibrant and diverse community that offers the services, supports and opportunities they need. The organization delivers innovative housing strategies that contribute to the overall health and well-being of Nova Scotians and the sustainable development of the province.

Innovation within the Department

In 2017-2018, the Department of Community Services has committed to taking an innovative approach to the way in which it operates and serves its clients. Indeed, innovation underpins everything undertaken in Transformation. The following examples highlight some of the key ways in which the Department incorporates innovation into its business plan and daily business, representing a fundamental shift in how we operate and how we ensure that our clients are best served:

Corporate Agreement Management

A Corporate Agreement Management (CAM) approach is in development that will allow the Department to demonstrate and support accountability in funding to Service Providers by ensuring the use of funds aligns with DCS' vision and supports the achievement of established client and system outcomes. Additionally, this approach will maximize the impact and accountability of the public funds it administers by:

- Formally communicating the outcomes to be achieved by DCS funded organizations;
- Ensuring DCS funded organizations comply with sound governance, financial and risk management practices throughout the funding lifecycle; and,
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for both DCS and funded organizations.

Development of Outcomes

Historically, there was no common vision for what success looked like for clients across each DCS program. DCS was providing a lot of support to clients, but it was difficult to demonstrate progress

towards the achievement of positive outcomes. These challenges led to the need for an Outcome Management Framework (OMF) which provides clear outcomes for each of the program areas and regular reporting on the success or otherwise of meeting benchmarks against those outcomes.

The framework is underpinned by 10 high level outcomes (goals), for both clients and the system (the way DCS operates). The Department's key priorities/activities are aligned under these goals.

Outcomes for clients include:

- Clients have control over their own lives;
- Clients are able to meet their basic needs;
- Clients are safe from abuse and violence;
- Clients are included in the community; and
- Clients are attached to the labour market.

Outcomes for the Department (System) include:

- Supports and services are affordable and sustainable;
- Supports and services are delivered efficiently;
- System of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention;
- Supports and services are accessible;
- DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives

The Department's goals are consistent with government's priorities - developing and delivering programs and services in a fiscally sustainable manner to help all Nova Scotians meet their fullest potential, supporting vulnerable populations, enhancing communities and social well-being, and enhancing workforce participation.

Child Welfare

Families Plus is a voluntary program that is being tested in Sydney as part of a new suite of prevention and intervention programs referred to as Stronger Families NS. It is designed to work with children and their families to reduce the occurrence of children coming into care. The program, delivered by third party community-based service providers, offers an intensive level of clinical casework, and a broad spectrum of support services to families in crisis for a period of up to nine months.

Post-Secondary Employment Supports

As with all DCS program areas, Employment Support Services is strengthening prevention and early intervention programs and services, proactively seeking to address early and underlying issues that prevent employment, in particular amongst those with historically poor employment outcomes. Recent proposed initiatives have all been accompanied with clear goals against which achievement will be measured.

Flex Independent

Flex Independent provides funding to participants who wish to live independently, with the assistance of their family/personal support network and standard community resources. This allows individual participants a far greater control on what services to buy and an accompanying

incentive on service providers to meet their needs in new and improved ways. In 2017-2018, DSP will increase funding to the Flex Independent program, enabling approximately 25 more participants to live independently with support from their families and/or personal and community support networks.

Collaborative Partnerships

In 2017-2018, the Department of Community Services plans to collaborate and form partnerships with other areas of government and/or agencies outside of government. This will include:

- Partnering with residential facilities to provide employment supports to youth in care;
- Working with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education's (LAE) Skills and Learning division to ensure the ongoing alignment and partnering of employment-focused program development, and with LAE's Adult Education division to ensure alignment of programming and continuity in service between departments for DCS clients;
- Partnering with the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to design programming and implement a new process to manage complex cases with high behavioural and medical needs;
- Collaborating with local SchoolsPlus programs to ensure vulnerable children and youth are accessing supports and services that will improve their wellbeing;
- Partnering with the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to ensure ESIA clients have access to supports and activities that keep them active and engaged within their communities.

Priorities, Activities and Initiatives for 2017-2018

In 2017-2018, the Department's major priorities, activities and initiatives will focus primarily on five of the ten high level departmental outcomes that have been identified in the overall Outcomes Management Framework. This will mean action towards ensuring that clients are safe from abuse and violence; supports and services are delivered efficiently; clients are included in the community; clients are able to meet their basic needs; and clients are attached to the labour market.

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

The impact of abuse and violence for persons of all ages is far reaching. It can have a damaging effect on an individual's ability to grow and succeed and leave a lasting legacy of trauma for child witnesses of domestic violence. It can be detrimental to their physical and mental health and can result in serious behavioral and societal consequences. Sexual violence is of the most traumatic human rights violations and can lead to complex social difficulties. The effects are negative and long lasting and in 2017-2018 the Department is taking actions toward ensuring that all clients are safe from abuse and violence.

Actions:

- The Sexual Violence Strategy, *Breaking the Silence,* has been a major success, but there is still much work to be done. Building on the momentum that has been achieved over the past three years, the Department will invest $1.1 million to continue to stimulate innovative programming that focuses on preventing and responding to sexualized violence, especially amongst children and youth.
- CYFS will extend new services and supports to youth 16 – 18 years inclusive, on a voluntary basis, to help them transition successfully to adulthood.

Outcome: Supports and services are delivered efficiently

Efficiency within the Government can take varying forms, including increased accountability to the Minister, reduced cost in the delivery of programs and increased quality of supports and services because of changes to an existing program. In 2017-2018, the Department will make changes to ensure supports and services are delivered more efficiently.

Actions:

- The Department will start the design of its Digital Services, which will benefit Nova Scotians by providing a common entry point into the DCS support and services system. It will allow Nova Scotians to access a variety of supports and services electronically including determining eligibility for Income Assistance, starting the application process, tracking the status of applications, and receiving status notifications.
- The Department will implement a streamlined reimbursement process for children in care expenses. The new process will reduce administrative burden while ensuring consistent, predictable and timely turnaround times.
- CYFS will improve access and transportation services to make a more efficient, stable and consistent system for children in care. The changes identified will put the needs of the child first and will ensure the system better meets their needs and those that care for them. To ensure these goals are met, the Department is dedicating additional resources and changing the hours of operation to provide services when children have the most need.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

For persons with disabilities, community inclusion can mean increased opportunities for volunteering, employment, recreational activities and engagement with others. It also means moving away from institutional placements to more supported living within the community. For children and youth, it means participating in sports, arts and other community activities no matter their family circumstances. For persons receiving income supports, being included in the community means reduced social isolation and increased contact with friends, family and neighbours. In 2017-2018, the Department is committed to helping clients feel included in their community.

Actions:

- DSP will begin the development of a new Adult Service Array which will modernize and improve the services and supports available through the program. The delivery system for

supports and services will have a reduced reliance on larger facilities and focus more on community-based residential services. A new service array will be developed to enable DSP participants to have choice and flexibility on where they receive supports, who provides their supports, and where they live. It will allow participants to live a more integrated, inclusive life by helping them transition successfully from facilities to communities. In 2017-2018, the Department has committed to an increase of $2.1 million to develop four additional Small Option Homes for DSP participants.

- DSP will design changes to the Independent Living Support program to offer greater choice, enhanced supports and increased funding flexibility, helping to ensure a seamless level of support between the current program and residential support.
- Despite its demonstrated benefits to children's physical, social, and emotional well-being, 54% of children in foster care do not currently participate in recreational activities, in part due to foster parents having to pay for these activities in advance. An automatic payment for recreation will help ensure foster parents are better able to provide children in care with opportunities for sports, arts and other community activities.
- There is an underrepresentation of adoptive and foster families in some communities. To rectify this, a pilot project is underway to focus on the recruitment and pre-assessment of adoptive and foster families of African descent. The pilot includes a specialized staff resource and targeted recruitment strategies which will be deployed in African Nova Scotian communities across the province.
- ESIA is working towards ensuring that clients are able to actively and independently pursue a high quality of life, regardless of their ability to participate in the labour market. Quality of life and social inclusion needs can be very diverse and over the next year, ESIA will be developing an approach to ensure clients have access to supports and activities that keep them active and engaged within their communities. The goal will be to support clients to connect to services in their communities and identify the service gaps and barriers to social inclusion.
- The Community ACCESS-Ability Program reflects the Government of Nova Scotia's commitment to persons with disabilities by providing opportunities to improve access to community facilities. This program offers cost-shared grants to community groups and organizations for accessibility related capital improvements. In 2017-2018, the Department has committed an additional $1 million for small businesses as well as an additional $800,000 to community groups to address some of their pressing needs with respect to accessibility.

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

To have hope for a brighter future, people need to be able to meet their basic needs. Having the financial means to access proper shelter, food and clothing is fundamental for a person's success and is a necessary predecessor for achieving self-sufficiency. Basic needs also stretch farther to include support in emergency situations or support to find the right place to live. The Department is committed to achieving its goal of ensuring that clients can meet their basic needs.

Actions:

- ESIA staff are updating and simplifying the current financial benefit system. The goal is to

have a system that is streamlined, predictable, consistent and less intrusive for the disbursement of financial supports.

- Foster families are loving and caring people who open their hearts and homes to children in need of temporary care, and the Department will improve the support we provide them. That is why we are investing $1.6 million annually to improve foster care. This includes increasing rates and adding new automatic payments to better support children in care.
- CYFS will make enhancements to provincial after-hours services to ensure children in care have access to and receive the services they need, no matter when they arise.
- ESIA, in partnership with CYFS, will work towards creating a continuum of supports that actively identifies and supports youth from childhood through to employment, preventing reliance on ESIA and breaking the cycle of generational poverty.
- The Department will provide a further $310,000 in Property Tax Rebate to help low income seniors remain in their own homes longer.
- The Provincial Government will develop a blueprint to break down poverty in Nova Scotia. The blueprint will build on work developed through Transformation initiatives, which is focused on redesigning programs to ensure they are effective and efficient in supporting low-income individuals and families to become independent, be a part of their communities and reach their full potential. In 2017-2018, $2 million will be committed to initiate this work and take concrete actions to impact the root causes of poverty.

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

Independence and self-sufficiency, including economic security through opportunities for employment, are fundamental to an acceptable quality of life in Nova Scotia. The Department wants to ensure that clients who can work are working and hopes to move toward a transformed state that works proactively to reduce reliance on income assistance.

Actions:

- ESIA will invest $1.8 million to develop, augment and implement targeted youth programing to reduce employment barriers. This will include strengthening existing Preventative Programming by expanding the Youth Development Initiative for the dependents of ESIA clients and DSP and CYFS-attached youth, expanding Employment Services to youth in care in residential facilities, and providing more wrap around services to youth who are new entrants to the ESIA system to address barriers impacting their ability to attach quickly to the labour market.
- In the winter of 2017, the Department made changes to the Workplace Support Program to help those in need of assistive devices and technical aids stay in their jobs and keep money in their pockets. Clients will no longer have to pay upfront for devices; clients can now be older than 65; minimum working hours have been lowered to five hours/week; wheelchair purchases have been added to the list of allowable assistive devices; the appeal process has been clarified; and program eligibility has been expanded to include post-secondary students who require technical aids and assistive devices over and above what is provided by the Post- Secondary Disability Services Program administered by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. In 2017-18, the Department will work toward making further improvements to supports that persons with disabilities need to stay in the workforce.
- In the fall of 2016, the Department made improvements to post-secondary supports for

vulnerable Nova Scotians. The Career Seek Program's financial supports have expanded to include one year of tuition, all student fees and all book costs, as well as an expansion of personal allowances to include child care and transportation, internet access, and incidentals to help with integration into campus life. The Educate to Work Program has been expanded to include some financial supports for eligible dependents of clients. Eligible dependents will receive funding for half the cost of tuition and full funding for text books, student fees, and health and dental insurance for core Nova Scotia Community College programs. We will continue improving our services in the next year, including:

- working towards increasing caseworker supports to students;
- working with NSCC to improve client outcomes;
- increasing access to Post-Secondary Wage Subsidies; and
- improving Job Development services to graduates.

- Vocational and other day program services complement the residential and other community-based support systems provided under the Disability Support Program (DSP). Supporting people to be included in their communities means more than where they live. It includes how they spend their days: working, volunteering and interacting in their communities. In 2017-2018, the Department will invest an additional $1million in this programming.

Conclusion

The Department of Community Services plays a pivotal role in working to ensure all Nova Scotians have the opportunity to live a fulfilling and rewarding life. We take that seriously, and will continue on a path of constant improvement to realize that vision. This Business Plan provides an understanding of some of the key initiatives and areas that we will be working on, and are investing in, as we strive to make Nova Scotia an even better place for all its citizens.

Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary ($ thousands)			
Programs and Services	2016-2017 Estimate	2016-2017 Forecast	2017-2018 Estimate
Senior Management	1,280	1,281	825
Policy and Innovation	4,696	4,002	10,363
Corporate Services Unit	5,028	4,556	4,338
Service Design and Delivery	103,417	105,558	103,075
Disability Support Program	319,366	323,547	333,330
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	93,863	93,998	92,460
Housing Services	44,992	45,158	47,528
Employment Services and Income Assistance Program	348,221	345,798	348,543
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	9,094	9,104	9,159
Total - Departmental Expenses	**929,957**	**933,002**	**949,621**
Ordinary Recoveries	**18,042**	**17,819**	**18,364**
Funded Staff (# of FTEs) Department Funded Staff	**1,630.5**	**1,614.5**	**1,603.0**

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2. For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter